



Defying Defiance

Is there anything as maddening as a child who boldly opposes authority? Far too many children these days openly challenge their parents authority. There are two main reasons that this happens:

- 1) The media tells them they should.
- 2) Their parents tell them they can.

Let's briefly address these two issues, and talk about what you can do about it. First, the media. We cannot hide our children in a bubble, nor would we want to. But we can:

- Educate our children about the difference between real life and life on the screen. Talk to your kids about what you watch on TV and at the movies. Compare what the screen showed with what would really happen.
- Be selective about what your children see and read. This implies that you should be aware and take an active role in deciding what they can or cannot view. Make your own decisions about what's right and wrong. Don't be misled by advertising and political rhetoric.

Okay, so far you're with me. It's easy to put the blame on the media. But now comes the part that's harder to accept. How are parents contributing to this problem?

Making unenforceable demands. When you demand something of your child that you cannot enforce, you open yourself up to defiance. As an example, you catch your child eating cookies before dinner and you yell, "You'd just better eat your dinner, young man!" Well, what are you going to do if he doesn't? Get the cookie back? Or a parent demands that her child "Go to sleep, right NOW!" Many insomniacs will gladly explain that you cannot make a person sleep! (You can make him go to bed, however!)

Too much talking and too little action. When you repeat your request to a child four or five times you weaken your position. Your child will quickly figure out that he can easily ignore you and suffer no repercussions. When you don't take the effort to quickly follow through on your request your child learns to defy you.

Lack of family rules. When your household is lacking firm and specific rules, your kids may defy you with "assumed ignorance". In other words, "If I didn't have to clear the table yesterday, maybe I can get away with not doing it today." Lack of rules forces you to make constant decisions and judgments and prevents your kids from learning the law of the land.

Constant nagging. When your child knows that the most he'll suffer for his defiance is the constant drone of your voice in the background, he may decide that the trade-off works for him. Parents who nag often have kids who are "parent deaf". The only cure is to talk less and act more.

Take a look at these points, and note which ones you are doing. Once you change your ways, you can defy defiance.

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